

Cove Lake State Park Strategic Management Plan

2023 – 2033

DRAFT

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Park Purpose, History and Description

The mission of Cove Lake State Park is *“to provide professional, effective management and stewardship of the park and all its resources, present compelling interpretation of the park’s story and resources, provide opportunities for safe enjoyable outdoor and recreational experiences to all park visitors, provide the highest quality hospitality and stay-use services and facilities, provide a safe and inspiring workplace for all park employees and volunteers, manage all park operations as efficient and cost effective as possible and to partner with local community leaders to bring a positive economic impact to the area surrounding the park.”*

Cove Lake State Park consisting of 606 acres is located within the city limits of Caryville in Campbell County Tennessee. Cove Lake State Park is situated in a picturesque valley surrounded by the Cumberland Mountains.

Archaeological excavations in the 1930s uncovered evidence of a Mississippian period Native American village near where US-25W now crosses Cove Lake, along the park's southern boundary. The site, known as the Irvin Mound Site, consisted of a large mound surrounded by a village that covered nearly 15 acres at its greatest extent. Several human burials, various pottery fragments, and tools and weapons made from stone, antler, and bone were uncovered at the site. All artifacts are now housed at the University of Tennessee’s McClung Museum.

Euro-American settlers first arrived in Powell Valley in the early 19th century. Located in the area of modern-day Cove Lake State Park, the community of Wheelerville was established as a railroad stop in 1867 by Mr. Thomas Wheeler encompassing over 1200 acres. By 1880 Wheelerville had changed its name to "Caryville" after a local family. Most of the early settlers were subsistence farmers sharing the land in what was called a “free soil farm”.

Cove Lake State Park was developed in the 1930s as one of the Norris Dam Project’s three demonstration recreational areas. From 1933-1941 the Civilian Conservation Corps 449th 3rd company SP-9 Division with the assistance of the National Park Service and TVA worked to create Cove Lake State Park. The CCC built the park office, restaurant, several stone cabins, a boat dock, park roads, and shelters, of which the park office and part of the restaurant are still standing. In 1950, the park was deeded to the state of Tennessee, which has since added more modern facilities.

The park’s most important recreational opportunities are camping, fishing, paddling, running, walking, cycling, and wildlife viewing. The combination of recreational opportunities alongside the cultural and historical significance within our park boundaries creates a unique visitor experience.

Goals, Objectives and Action Plans

THE RESOURCES: Exemplary Natural and Cultural Stewardship

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be nationally recognized for exemplary stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Objective - *More and better stewards:* Increase internal and external stewards who share Tennessee State Parks core values and can contribute to the State Parks mission to preserve, protect, and share Tennessee's natural and cultural resources.

Action Plan:

1. Partner with the local school system to "adopt" a specific grade level across the county. The goal would be to positively impact an entire grade level within a school year. The partnership would be developed in a manner to provide an educational mission driven park program to the entire grade level. If successful the partnership could be replicated each year, to further promote our mission to Increase park's stewardship.
2. Partner with Caryville Elementary to develop an outdoor classroom program at Cove Lake State Park.
3. Schedule Park tours and project updates annually with local leaders. Participate in annual Leadership Campbell County events. Provide Park project updates with the Campbell County Chamber of Commerce. Partner with Jacksboro TCAT's Hospitality and Tourism advisory board.
4. Work with Friends of Cove Lake to develop clean-up days and special events. Partner with local church groups and community organizations to conduct invasive plant removal, litter clean-up, and other park improvement projects.

Objective - *Better resource management practices:* Identify, manage, and restore unique natural and cultural resources for generations to come.

Action Plan:

1. Within the development of individual performance plans for each Park Ranger, include work outcomes designed to expand and develop individual growth within resource management. Develop goals to work with IAP, Natural Areas, and other internal resources to complete trainings and developmental workshops.
2. Work annually to develop and update resource management plans addressing the preservation of Cove Lake State Park's historic CCC structures and Wheeler Cemetery. Partner with UTK to acquire Native American artifacts collected from Cove Lake State Park and establish an interpretive display for the collection. Work to restore the historic "Powder Shed" structure constructed by the CCC for the storage of materials during initial park construction.
3. Develop a project to install a Natural Playscape and outdoor classroom. Work to create an area that would encourage free play and exploration in the natural environment.

4. Expand programming opportunities to foster a unique outdoor experience. Further develop Cove Lake Kayak tours to include a more detailed and specific experience and develop several kayak tours to highlight specific natural and cultural aspects of Cove Lake State Park.

Objective: *Better data and technology:* Leverage data and technology to help inform and guide decisions on natural and cultural resources stewardship.

Action Plan:

1. Work with the Office of Strategy and Support's GIS team to provide individual training to Cove Lake State Park Staff. Trainings would include Invasive Species, Trail Planning, Vegetation Management, Cultural Resources, Park Assets, Utilities, Rare Species, Ecological Layers, Walking/Driving Tours, Historic Maps, Survey123 Designing, Dashboards, Custom Web Maps or Field Collections, Charts, etc.
2. Work with partnering agencies to identify and locate potential unprotected natural and cultural areas and sites.
3. Partner with TWRA to conduct Turtle and Fish surveys to help determine future regulation, policy, and protection guidelines.

THE VISITOR: Welcoming and Inviting to All

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be the most accessible, welcoming, and inviting system of parks that enriches Tennesseans and visitors through excellent interpretation, education, and resource-based recreation.

Objective: *accessible, welcoming, and inviting to all:* create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited.

Action Plan:

1. Maintain the Story Book Trail. Work with other parks that participate in the program to swap story boards each year ensuring the program continues to engage the community.
2. Develop and expand the current interpretive programs offered at Cove Lake State Park telling the story of the indigenous peoples of the area and their significance to Cove Lake State Park's history.
3. Conduct Ranger guided kayak tours of Cove Lake. During the guided tour discuss flora, fauna, and history of the area.
4. Provide unique programming opportunities, such as the Junior Ranger Camp.
5. Partner with TWRA and local fishing clubs to offer programs to engage youth to the sport of fishing.
6. Partner with organizations such as the American Hiking Society to offer a program to build and maintain trails as a Volunteer Vacation program.
7. Expand program and recreational opportunities to entice more group team building opportunities encouraging visitors to visit more frequently and stay longer.

Objective: *high quality programming:* develop and support mission-based and resource-relevant programs to engage visitors, empower staff, and develop community wellbeing.

Action Plan:

1. Develop virtual tours of Cove Lake to connect differently abled persons to enjoy. Example: Utilizing digital media record and develop a video of a kayak tour.
2. Utilize QR codes at special places within the park that would allow visitors to further research and explore specific areas. Example: Place QR codes at wildlife observation deck to allow visitors to discover waterfowl species found at Cove Lake State Park.
3. Develop interpretive signage detailing the history of Cove Lake State Park.
4. Work with IAP to develop AI based interpretive areas. Example: develop an AI program to allow visitors to engage in a Native American Village that would have been located at the site.

Objective: *resource-based outdoor recreation:* provide resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities that ensure representation of Tennessee's natural, scenic, and cultural resources.

Action Plan:

1. Develop and provide resource-based and recreation opportunities for outdoor recreation opportunities that ensure representation of park's natural, scenic, and cultural assets.
2. Develop programs aimed toward the basics of outdoor recreation. Example: Develop a program to instruct how to cook basic meals at campfires.
3. Partner with the ACA "American Canoe Association" to develop and offer classes on basic Kayaking Skills.
4. Partner with Natural Areas to conduct kayak tours on blue line areas in nearby locations.

AMENITIES: Well-Maintained Facilities and Amenities

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be well maintained with facilities and amenities that delight visitors and make Tennesseans proud.

Objective: *Improve maintenance:* Improve overall maintenance and upkeep of all park facilities and amenities that contribute to meaningful visitor experiences.

Action Plan:

1. Work with Facilities Maintenance to develop a comprehensive list of maintenance needs organized by priority.
2. Utilizing existing maintenance database to develop preventative maintenance on necessary equipment to help prolong the operation of vital equipment.
3. Partner with GIS staff to conduct and document Trail assessments and Hazardous Tree Management plans.
4. Develop plans and partnerships to provide additional ADA compliant facilities.

Objective: *Better park accessibility:* ensure all visitors have opportunities for meaningful experiences in every Tennessee State Park.

Action Plan:

1. Develop and maintain aesthetically pleasing and informative park signage.
2. Partner with Facilities to install internet service to park facilities including a public service for campground guests.
3. Develop partnerships with “park design” professionals ensuring all newly installed park facilities are aesthetically pleasing and fit within the overall Tennessee State Park design plans.
4. Work to develop a Campground Renovation project to provide better access for all within the campground area.

Objective: *Quality and welcoming facilities and amenities:* provide high-quality and well-planned facilities and amenities that enrich the visitor experience.

Action Plan:

1. Work with Facilities Maintenance to ensure all park facilities are consistent in color and repainted on a scheduled timeframe.
2. Develop a weekly maintenance schedule to ensure all necessary maintenance is consistently conducted.
3. Share customer surveys with entire park staff to help identify both positive and negative trends with park maintenance.
4. Develop QR codes that allow a visitor to submit suggestions or report issues at specific facilities. Example: Place a QR code at the Recreation Building allowing the user to report any needed repairs or improvement suggestions, with the data directly sent to both Park Manager and Facilities Supervisor.

THE OPERATIONS: Operational Excellence

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be a national model for operational excellence in a state park system.

Objective: *Support and empower our people:* support and empower our workforce by creating a caring environment that encourages professional growth and great customer service.

Action Plan:

1. Work with and encourage staff to attend trainings offered by POD. Encourage Park employees to attend professional growth and leadership trainings such as the TDEC Green Leadership program. Ensure each employee with direct reports completes the Learning Pyramid trainings. Encourage employee growth and knowledge by researching and attending other out of department trainings and professional development trainings relevant to their responsibilities.
2. Partner with local universities and colleges to recruit and hire professionals within our field. Example: partner with Jacksboro TCAT to recruit maintenance employees with HVAC, welding, and other certifications.
3. Partner with area schools to recruit and hire part-time park employees to perform boat rentals, campground registrations, and park maintenance.

Objective: *Efficient and effective operations:* provide efficient, effective, and fiscally responsible service to Tennesseans and our visitors.

Action Plan:

1. Build and maintain partnerships with nonprofit entities. Partner with local chamber of commerce, lion club, local libraries, Friends of Cove Lake, and schools.
2. Meet with County Mayor quarterly to discuss projects and provide updates on park specific issues.
3. Meet with State of Tennessee officials such as State Representative and Senator annually to provide park updates and status of specifically sponsored projects.

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Park Overview

Site Fact Sheet

Park Name	Cove Lake State Park
Site Manager	Casey E. Hatmaker
Area Manager	Kim A. Moore
Park acreage	606
Total number of visitors (FY 2022)	659273
Total expenses before CO (FY 2022)	935466
Total revenues (FY 2022)	492398
Retail cost recovery % ¹	147.7%
Park cost recovery %	52%
Average expense per visitor (FY 2022)	\$1.41
Average revenue per visitor (FY 2022)	.74
Gross profit or loss	(443068)
Total full-time available positions / filled	11/11
Total part-time available positions / filled	4/4
Primary feeder markets	Knox County encompassing the cities of Knoxville, Farragut, Powell, Halls, and Fountain City. Anderson County encompassing the cities of Rocky Top, Clinton, Oak Ridge, and Andersonville.
Primary reasons people visit	Much of our visitation comes from within a 30–45-mile radius. The park's existence plays a significant role to its local/nearby residence. They rely on the park for recreation, wellness activities, education, and interpretation as well as special events.
Opportunities for improvement	Campground amenities, Gift Shop expansion, improve Recreation Building, develop an interpretative center, build a Natural Playground.

¹ Based on T.C.A. 11-3-305, Cost recovery of revenue-generating facilities

Key Attractions

The amenities or features listed below are those that seem to be most popular for visitors.

- Campground: Cove Lake currently has a 100-campsite campground that attracts visitors from across the United States.
- Picnic area/Day Use: Cove Lake has over 100 picnic tables free to the public. Two ADA compliant traditional playgrounds, fishing pier, open fields, and trails.
- Indoor meeting facility: Popular for weddings and family reunions the recreation building has a kitchen and meeting space able to accommodate 130 visitors. A field area can also be reserved along with the recreation building enabling the visitor to host memorable wedding events.
- Fishing: With a 200-acre lake Cove Lake State Park offers an abundance of fishing and paddling opportunities. Fishing boats are available for rental, kayaks, canoes, and SUP are allowed with a permit fee. Bank fishing is also popular with several easily accessible areas including a fishing pier.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities are abundant at Cove Lake. 3.8 miles of paved trails wandering through woods and along the lake bank enable visitors to run, walk, and bike. Several horseshoe pits, two volleyball courts, a basketball court and tennis court are popular with visitors as well.

Site and Operations Assessment

This site and operations assessment is a culmination of analyses and findings from a review of the condition of facilities, infrastructure, and operations at Cove Lake State Park. The findings and observations are not intended to be an exhaustive review of all issues present but provide a basic understanding of the predominant issues that contribute to the site's current operating conditions. The assessment includes the following:

1. Site and Facilities Assessment
2. Operational Assessment
3. Financial Assessment

Site and Facility Assessment

Methodology

Facility and asset conditions are rated using a differential scale of excellent, good, fair, or poor. Descriptions of conditions that are attributed to each of these findings are also provided.

Scale of Conditions	
Rating	General Description
Excellent	Facilities/amenities are in 'excellent' condition when they show little or no maintenance or repair problems. Facilities do not feature any major design or operational issues or flaws that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into public use and the users perceive them to be in excellent shape.
Good	Facilities/amenities are in 'good' condition when they show only minor maintenance or repair problems. Most maintenance issues with these facilities typically appear to be the result of age and/or heavy use. Facilities may only feature minor design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities are moderately easy to clean and maintain in order to place them back into service and the users perceive them to be adequate for their use, but probably not in excellent shape.
Fair	Facilities/amenities are in 'fair' condition when they show significant maintenance or repair problems. Facilities generally exhibit ongoing maintenance issues that appear to be the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Some maintenance and repair needs may compound their fair condition by being deferred because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities require more effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users may perceive them as being less than adequate for their use and in a state of deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement.
Poor	Facilities/amenities are in 'poor' condition when they show significant, on-going maintenance or repair problems that ultimately may result in suspended use for repair/replacement. Maintenance and repair issues are possibly the result of poor maintenance and clearly the result of age, heavy use, or design or operational flaws. Problems with the facilities are often compounded over time due to consistently-deferred maintenance and repair because of budget and/or resource limitations. Facilities may feature major design or operational issues that contribute to diminished use or increased maintenance or upkeep. Facilities require excessive effort to clean and maintain before placing them back into service and the users often perceive them as being inadequate for their use and in a state of serious deterioration. The facility or structure may need of major repair or replacement.

Facility Inventory and Assessment

The table below is an inventory of facilities and amenities at Cove Lake State Park and provides the assessed condition of each as reviewed in May 2023.

Site Asset / Amenity	Quantity	Condition
Maintenance Building	1	Fair
Paved Trail	1	Fair
Basketball Courts	1	Good
Bathhouses	2	Fair
Boat Dock	1	Fair
Boat Ramp	1	Good
Camper Check-in Stations	1	Good
Campsites	100	Fair
Dam	1	Good
Equipment Sheds	2	Fair
Fishing Pier	1	Good
Kayak Launch	1	Fair
CCC Powder Shed	1	Poor
Picnic Shelters	6	Good
Playgrounds	4	Good
Rangers Residences	5	Fair
Recreation Hall	1	Good
Restaurant / Kitchen	1	Fair
Restrooms	4	Fair
Roads / Paving	4	Fair
Snack Bar	1	Poor
CCC constructed Storage Buildings	2	Fair
Swimming Area (POOL)	1	Poor
Tennis Courts	3	Good
Trails	2	Fair
CCC constructed Visitor Center / Park Office	1	Good
Volleyball Courts	2	Fair

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Trail Name	Mileage	Condition
Beavers Workshop Trail	0.39	poor
Cove Lake Paved Walking Trail	3.35	moderate
Cumberland Trail	0.97	good
Volunteer Trail	0.56	fair
Wildlife Observation Station Trail	0.20	poor
Grand Total	5.48	

Trail Inventory and Assessment

Cove Lake State Park has 3.8 miles of paved trail throughout the park. The trail is popular for running, walking, and cycling. The trail was last paved in the 1980's and is currently in need of resurfacing. Several sections are damaged from overuse, and other sections are uneven due to tree roots. Cove Lake has one traditional trail "Volunteer Trail Loop" that is a 2.5-mile loop, with connection to the Cumberland Trail. This trail was created in 2000 and is currently in good condition.

New Assets Needed

List new assets and amenities that would fall under capital expenditures that are needed to improve visitor experience and operational efficiency.

New Asset & Amenities	Description
Campground Renovation	Develop a capital project to renovate campground.
Natural Playground/Playscape	Install interactive playground. Project will include an outdoor classroom and ADA compliant facilities.
Construct new picnic shelter	Construct one new picnic shelter, supported with attached restrooms, large grill, fireplace, and paved parking, to accommodate 100-125 people.
New Visitor/Interpretive Center	Construct new visitor center to incorporate interpretive center, amphitheater, interpretive trail, gift shop and convert existing office (original CCC facility) to an interpretive center with possible artifacts from the excavation, CCC and TVA displays and environmental displays.

Prioritized Facility Needs

Based on the facility inventory and assessment, these prioritized needs have been identified.

Facility Need	Priority Assignment
Campground: Campground renovation project.	High
Restaurant renovation project.	High
Recreation building: Renovation project designed to replace countertops flooring, add Wi Fi service, and replace decking.	Moderate
Repair/replace walking trail bridge	High
Playgrounds maintenance: adding approved ADA mulch	Moderate to High
Paved Trail: Resurface and repair damaged sections of paved trail.	Moderate
Restrooms: Remove old facilities and replace with new prefabricated bathrooms.	High
Powder Shed renovation project	Moderate
Renovate Kayak launch to improve the functionality of area.	Moderate
Renovate Maintenance facility	Moderate
CCC structures	Medium
CCC Powder Shed repairs	Medium

Operational Assessment

The Operational Assessment includes:

1. An inventory and classification of programs and services being provided at the site,
2. A review of staffing at the site,
3. A review of concessionaires and partners operating at the site,
4. Visitation and customer satisfaction, and
5. Professional development and training.
- 6.

Inventory and Classification of Programs and Services

Programs and services are classified into one of three major categories:

- 1) Core or Essential Services;
- 2) Important Services; and
- 3) Value added or Visitor Supported Services.

Functions of the site are classified into these categories based in part on the mission and public mandates for both the site and the agency. For the programs and services in each of these categories, there are financial performance expectations that will define how services are funded and evaluated.

CATEGORY 1 – CORE SERVICES *[Largely supported by public subsidies]*

Core programs, services and facilities are those the agency must provide and/or are essential in order to capably govern and meet statutory requirements. The failure of the agency to provide Category 1 services at adequate levels could result in significant negative consequences for the public and the

resources under protection. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as core or essential are:

The following programs and services offered at Cove Lake State Park have been identified as **core services**:

- Support the mission of Tennessee State Parks which is “to preserve and protect, in perpetuity, unique examples of natural, cultural, and scenic areas and provide a variety of safe, quality, outdoor experiences through a well-planned and professionally managed system of state parks.
- Provide for public access to the park, the facilities and the grounds.
- Provide for public safety for visitors and protection of natural and cultural resources.
- Provide for maintenance of grounds, facilities and infrastructure.
- Maintain facilities developed through the LWCF program to required standards.
- Provide for basic, non-staff supported day-use activities (such as hiking and picnicking) with trails, informational signage, picnic tables, trash cans and restroom facilities.
- Maintain Park drinking water and wastewater programs to state standards.

CATEGORY 2 – IMPORTANT SERVICES *[Supported by a balance of revenues and public subsidy]*

Important programs, services and facilities are those the agency should provide, and are important to governing and effectively serving residents, businesses, customers and partners. Providing Category 2 services expands or enhances the agency’s ability to provide and sustain its core services. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as important are:

- The services expand, enhance or support identified core services.
- The services are broadly supported and utilized by the community, and are considered an appropriate, important, and valuable public good. Public support may be conditional upon the manner by which the services are paid for or funded.
- The services generate income or revenue that offsets some or all of the operating cost and/or are deemed to provide economic, social or environmental outcomes or results.

The following programs and services offered at Cove Lake State Park have been identified as important services:

- Provide a full range of environmental, cultural, and recreational programs.
- Offer park-specific information at the Visitor Center and Nature Center.
- Provide educational programs for schools and organized groups.
- Provide support services, needed maintenance as per license agreement, to Rickard Ridge BBQ Restaurant, leased operation.

CATEGORY 3 – VISITOR SUPPORTED SERVICES *[Almost exclusively supported by earned revenue]*

Visitor supported programs, services and facilities are those discretionary services that the agency may provide when additional funding or revenue exists to offset the cost of providing those services. Category 3 services provide added value above and beyond what is required or expected. The criteria for programs or services to be classified as visitor supported are:

- The services expand, enhance or support Core Services, Important Services and the quality of life of the visitors, community or stakeholders.
- The services are supported, valued and well utilized and provide an appropriate and valuable public benefit.
- The services generate income or funding from sponsorships, grants, user fees or other sources that offset some or all their cost and/or provides a meaningful return on investment.

- The Services can possibly be provided through outsourcing or use of concessionaires, providing opportunities for community enterprise or services that may not otherwise be provided by the agency.

The following programs and services offered at Cove Lake State Park have been identified as **visitor supported services**:

- Operate assembly hall facilities for meetings, wedding, etc.
- Operate and provide retail support services for the gift shop.
- Provide support services for 100 tent/RV campsites.
- Provide support services for day use facilities including Recreation Building, Picnic Shelters, and picnic area.
- Operate and manage boat rental facility.

Personnel / Staffing Review

Personnel and staffing at Cove Lake State Park represent the largest area of budgetary expense at an average of 47% of the total operating budget each year for the last three complete years, which is 18 less percent than the target of labor costs not exceeding 65% of total operating expenditures. The tables below and on the following page provide a basic review of the current staffing at the site.

Full Time Equivalent Employees

Position / Title	Quantity (FTE)	Compensation Total
Park Manager 2	1	*
Park Ranger 2	3	*
Admin Assistant 1	1	42924.00
Clerk 3	1	30204.00
Facilities Supervisor	1	59700.00
Conservation Worker 2	1	33900.00
Conservation Worker 1	3	91212.00
TOTAL	11	518472.00

**Law enforcement compensation confidential by TN law.*

Part Time Employees

Position / Title	Quantity	Compensation Total
Laborer	3	85512.00
Lifeguard	1	13747.50
TOTAL	4	99259.50

Labor Support

Labor Support	Annual Hours
Volunteers	224
Community Service Workers	0
Engineering and Construction Crews	0
Resource Management Crews	0
Other:	
TOTAL	

Total Labor Compensation Expense

Labor Type	Labor Expense
Full Time Equivalent Employees	518472.00
Part Time Employees	99259.50
TOTAL Annual Labor Expense	617731.50

Additional Future Positions Needed

Position / Title	Quantity	FTE or PT	Year Needed	Justification
Conservation Worker 1	1	FTE	2024	Utilize position for year-round staffing of the Campground office.
Conservation Worker 1	2	FTE	2024	Utilize two additional positions in Park's Maintenance Department to complete deferred maintenance to facilities.
TOTAL	3			

Financial Performance

Revenue per available unit (**Rev Per Unit**) for the last four years in park facilities is detailed in the table below.

Current Rev Per Unit

Fiscal Year	Campground Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2019	10.81	18.63
2020	11.72	14.09
2021	15.17	16.07
2022	13.30	19.22

Projected Rev Per Unit - Based on current Rev Per Unit trends at the park and any known developments over the next four years.

Fiscal Year	Campground Rev Per Unit	Day Use Rev Per Unit
2023	13.69	19.79
2024	14.10	20.38
2025	14.52	20.99
2026	14.95	21.61

Customer Service

Platform / Site	Year	Customer Satisfaction Level
Cove Lake State Park General Survey Data	FY22/23	53

Professional Development and Training

The following professional development and training opportunities are being explored and planned for the staff and volunteers at this park:

1. Developing Direct Reports and Others
2. SMART Performance Planning
3. GREAT Customer Service
4. Respectful Workplace for Manager
5. Sexual Harassment
6. STAR Principles of GREAT Customer Service
7. Navigating Practice and Policies for Supervisors
8. Performance Management System
9. Performance Coaching

Summary of Key Recommendations

Please provide short-term, mid-term, and long-term recommendations for addressing operational issues at the park and improving overall park performance.

Short Term Recommendations (Less than 1 year)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Complete a waterline replacement project.
- b. Develop a project to renovate the Recreation building. Project shall include replacement of flooring, cabinets, and interior doors. Project would also include installation of a changing area for potential wedding guests, improved kitchen facilities, renovated deck, and pathway to field area.
- c. Complete a capital project to replace the picnic area bathroom.
- d. Develop a project to renovate and improve Park Restaurant facilities. Project would include exterior paint, and cosmetic repairs. Project would also include interior work, painting, lighting, kitchen upgrades, and new exhaust fans.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Park Manager will monitor all employee hours, full and part time, monthly via an excel spreadsheet provided by Admin Assistant 1 documenting monthly hours throughout the fiscal year.
- b. Full time hours will not exceed allotted amount of 1950 hours.
- c. Seasonal/part time hours will not exceed total amount of hours allocated to the park, (8775 hours, this includes all seasonal and job share positions) and will be closely monitored and reduced due to inclement weather and slow visitation.
- d. Each part time/seasonal employee shall not exceed 1560 hours for PPACA guidelines.
- e. Overtime usage will be requested and approved in necessary situations.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Maintain and annually swap with other participating parks the Story Book Trail story boards. This will help ensure park visitors are receiving a new and exciting story each year they visit.
- b. Maintain and expand the Native Warm Season Grasses area.
- c. Implement the all-terrain ADA compliant mobility devices project as proposed by Facilities Maintenance department.

Mid Term Recommendations (2-5 years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Complete a campground renovation capital project.
- b. Demolition, repair, or replace of the picnic area bathroom that is currently closed and in need of repairs.
- c. Complete work to Cove Lake Dam to improve gate valve and replace upper timbers.
- d. Develop a project to renovate the aging playground located in the picnic area.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Continue to develop and train each park employee.
- b. Work with local TCAT to participate in applicable trainings to further employee growth and benefit the overall park mission.
- c. Evaluate each position to determine future park needs.
- d. Continue to utilize volunteers in the form of campground hosts to help operate campground throughout the season.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

4. Develop a project to replace and upgrade the wildlife observation tower.
5. Improve Park signage, including both directional and interpretive signage to ensure relevance and consistency.
6. Develop a project to improve boat rental operations. Project would include improvements and modifications to dock area, kayak launch access point and signage.

Long Term Recommendations (5+ years)

1. Site and Facilities

- a. Repair water leaks within 24 hours of notified leak. All larger leaks will be reported to Caryville/Jacksboro Utilities to request a reduction in billing due to 125% sewage charge added to each gallon used.
- b. Continue to perform semi-annually, Spring and Fall seasons, preventive maintenance for HVAC units to ensure peak performance and to extend the life span of the units.
- c. Evaluate and replace needed picnic tables within the park.

2. Operations and Staffing

- a. Continue to monitor employee hours to determine optimum efficiency.
- b. Monitor seasonal/part time hours to ensure total amount of hours allocated to the park are not exceeded. Manage and reduce hours based on inclement weather and lower visitation.
- c. Each part time/seasonal employee shall not exceed 1560 hours for PPACA guidelines.
- d. Continue to ensure overtime usage will be requested and approved in necessary situations.
- e. Park Manager and or designee will meet with the County Mayor and or Chamber quarterly.

3. Customer Service / Visitor Experience

- a. Acquire park-wide video capability. Explore the creation of a park-wide video to include possible vendors, cost etc. that can be used for marketing as well as park programming
- b. Utilize State Park's social media to advertise park events, programs and amenities as well as gift shop items.
- c. Utilize Park's reservation system resources to send out frequent e-mails to our customer base with new coupons, activities and events.
- d. Contact local vendors to encourage a partnership that provides our campers with coupons encouraging them to seek out and use our local resources.
- e. Develop passive surveys and intrusive surveys. Researching demographics will help point the marketing effort in the right direction. It will also help in the decision to develop park services and activities.
- f. Utilize customer survey for general park visitors and overnight guests to capture length of stay, activities utilized and desired.
- g. Conduct an annual passive survey of license plates, to help determine how to properly market to specific areas.

Resource Management Plan

A resource management plan is a specific statement of the objectives you have for your land and natural resources, as well as any significant cultural and historic resources stewarded by the state park. This includes a defined series of priorities and activities that will take place in order to meet those objectives. This can include future potential land acquisitions or divestitures that are necessary to meet the park's resource management goals and objectives.

Cove Lake State Park's resource protection purpose is to provide professional, effective management and stewardship of the park and all its resources. Present compelling interpretation of the park's story and resources. Provide opportunities for safe enjoyable outdoor and recreational experiences to all park visitors. Continue to provide the highest quality hospitality and stay-use services and facilities. Create a safe and inspiring workplace for all park employees and volunteers. Manage all park operations as efficient and cost effective as possible and, partner with local community leaders to bring positive economic impact to the surrounding area.

Cove Lake will be forever held by the citizens of The State of Tennessee to commemorate the people who have had a dramatic impact on the park and its surrounding area. Professionally conducted interpretation will tell the story of the Indigenous peoples of the area "Mound Builders", the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Tennessee Valley Authority. Interpretation of the site will focus on the various historical, cultural, and Natural resources, and the stories each hold.

The contents of this resource management plan are as follows:

1. Resource Management Objectives
2. Resource Inventory and Assessment
3. Management Strategies
4. Priority Actions
5. Supplemental Information

Resource Management Objectives

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be nationally recognized for exemplary stewardship of natural and cultural resources.

Objective - *More and better stewards:* Increase internal and external stewards who share Tennessee State Parks core values and can contribute to the State Parks mission to steward Tennessee's natural and cultural resources.

Objective - *Better resource management practices:* Identify, manage, and restore unique natural and cultural resources for generations to come.

Objective: *Better data and technology:* Leverage data and technology to help inform and guide decisions on natural and cultural resources stewardship.

Aligned with these objectives are specific strategies to achieve the desired outcomes for the natural, cultural, and historic resources of this park.

Strategies

1. Reduce overall volume of Eurasian Milfoil in Cove Lake.
 - a. Make needed repairs to Cove Lake Dam valve in order to draw down and lower lake levels during the cold season months to expose the Eurasian Milfoil to freezing conditions.
 - b. Repair leaking tiers on Cove Lake Dam to maintain a more constant lake level.
 - c. Work to develop a management plan designed to consistently lower the lake every two to three years until the Eurasian Milfoil has been reduced.
2. Removal of dead and dying infested trees within Cove Lake State Park.
 - a. Work with Department of Forestry to identify dead, infested, and dying trees.
 - b. Continue to utilize and update the Hazardous Tree Management Plan to identify and eliminate trees that pose a safety issue.
 - c. Secure funding from outside sources to reduce impact to the park budget.
3. Educate Park visitors of the existing natural resources within Cove Lake State Park.
 - a. Identify areas of lake bank that contain a high diversity of natural resources.
 - b. Develop a plan to secure funding for design and installation of educational interpretive signage throughout Cove Lake.
 - c. Develop self-guided trails, highlighting unique and interesting areas of Cove Lake State Park.
4. Promote the significance of the Mound Builders that occupied the area.
 - a. Secure funding to replace interpretive signage with modern interpretive panels designed to provide visitors with a more complete picture into the peoples that inhabited the area focusing on their importance and way of life.
 - b. Work with UT's McClung Museum to secure documentation for use with new interpretive panels.
 - c. Work with UT's McClung Museum to acquire artifacts excavated from park area.
5. Preserve the early history of Cove Lake State Park focusing on the role TVA and CCC played during the park's development.
 - a. Secure historically significant photographs, including original CCC built areas.
 - b. Display historically significant photographs, artifacts, and interpretive panels at park visitor center.
 - c. Continue to develop ways to showcase original CCC construction and craftsmanship at Park Visitor Center.
6. Restore historically significant areas within the park to original condition.
 - a. Develop a plan to restore the CCC powder shed, a historic area used to house the materials needed to construct the Cove Lake Dam.
 - b. Develop a trail leading visitor to the CCC powder shed.
 - c. Utilize volunteer labor in develop and construction of trail.

Resource Inventory and Assessment

The significant natural, cultural and historic resources of the park requiring management are detailed below including a condition assessment rating for each. Condition assessments are selected from the following options based on what most describes the current condition of the resource:

1. **Excellent** – resource is in excellent condition; all potential threats to the integrity of the resource are currently managed and effectively mitigated.
2. **Good** – resource is generally in good condition and stable; threats to the integrity of the resource require regular management in order to mitigate.
3. **Fair** – resource is in stable condition but difficult to mitigate ongoing threats; additional management support is required.
4. **Poor** – resource is generally in poor condition with management support required to both improve existing conditions and address threats.
5. **Critical** – resource is highly threatened or deteriorated and requires immediate management prioritization.

Significant Park Resources	Quantity	Current Conditions	Notes
Hardwood Forest	44%	Good	Forests are healthy second growth. Invasive plant species are a growing threat to several areas.
Aquatic (Cove Lake)	35%	Poor	Lake is in poor condition due to large amounts of silt collecting at the bottom of the lake. This is a result from past strip-mining and current erosion issues.
Open areas (fields and Picnic areas)	21%	Good	Maintained grass fields consisting of a widely spread mixture of hardwoods and evergreens.
Historic Park structures	3	Fair	CCC built Park Visitor Center, Park Restaurant, and Powder Shed.
Paved Trails	3.8 miles	Fair	Trail needs repair in several locations due to erosion and tree roots causing undulations in surface material.

Management Strategies

The management strategies outlined below are directly correlated to the resources identified previously in the *Resource Inventory and Assessment* section immediately above. These are general and overall management recommendations for each resource from which priority actions will be determined. Each resource has both a “Public Use” management strategy (which could include limited or no public access, or managed access with infrastructure and regulation) and a “General Management” strategy.

The priority assignments reflect the highest resource management priorities of the park over the next 1-5 years (High Priority) and 6-10 years (Moderate Priority)

Resource	Management Recommendations	Priority
Cove Lake	<p>Public Use: 210-acre lake along with 3 major tributaries are managed access with infrastructure and regulation.</p> <p>General Management: Rental of fishing boat and launching of private kayaks, canoes, and Stand-Up Paddle boards are facilitated at boat rental area.</p>	High
Open Areas	<p>Public Use: Managed access of picnic areas and open fields.</p> <p>General Management: Rental of picnic shelters, field area and day use facilities. Ensure areas are safe, clean, and closed from Sunset until 8:00 AM.</p>	High
Paved Trails	<p>Public Use: Managed areas with regulation and infrastructure maintenance.</p> <p>General Management: Usage is restricted to pedestrians, bicycles, and pets.</p>	High
Historic Park structures	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation.</p> <p>General Management: Park Visitor Center/office is utilized daily from 8:00 AM until 11:30 PM for visitor interaction and Park Ranger administrative needs.</p>	Medium
Forest	<p>Public Use: Managed access with infrastructure and regulation.</p> <p>General Management: The forests are managed for improvement of overall forest health which include ongoing invasive species management.</p>	Medium

Land Management Strategies

In some cases, strategic land acquisitions or divestitures are necessary to meet the overall resource management goals and objectives of the park. This can include opportunities to address buffers, watersheds, viewsheds, inholdings, and adjacent properties. The table below details **general strategies** for land management. Timelines refer to Short Term (1-3 years), Mid Term (4-6 years), and Long Term (7-10 years).

Land Management Strategy	Timeline
Purchase Park adjacent property to maintain buffer areas, protect park boundaries, and increase park acreage.	Mid Term

Interpretive Programming and Education Plan

The Interpretation, Programming, and Education planning is currently going through a planning process to further build out the process. This section only represents the very basic framework. As TSP moves forward with the future of Interpretive programming and education this section will likely be changed to accommodate those modifications.

Attached to this plan are the Interpretive Program Templates in fillable PDF forms.

To interpret Cove Lake State Park's account and how its establishment, by means of Tennessee Valley Authority and the Civilian Conservation Corp, influenced the people of the area, past and present as well as for future generations.

To convey the history and culture of these lands and its early inhabitants as well as endorse the natural and recreational resources protected and created as a Demonstration Area due to the institution of the Tennessee Valley Authority and Civilian Conservation Corps under the guidance of National Parks.

Interpretation, Programming and Education Goals

Goal: Tennessee State Parks will be the most accessible, welcoming, and inviting system of parks that enriches Tennesseans and visitors through excellent interpretation, education, and resource-based recreation.

Objective: *accessible, welcoming, and inviting to all:* create quality and varied programs of interpretation, recreation, and outreach so that all audiences feel welcome and invited.

Objective: *high quality programming:* develop and support mission-based and resource-relevant programs to engage visitors, empower staff, and develop community wellbeing.

Objective: *resource-based outdoor recreation:* provide resource-based outdoor recreation opportunities that ensure representation of Tennessee's natural, scenic, and cultural resources.

Within these objectives are the following desired outcomes:

- Building stewards
- Ensuring Equity
- Provide the Highest Value
- Develop Resource Based Programming
- Support Staff

Strategic Programs and Services

The strategies detailed below with corresponding action plans are aligned with the Comprehensive Strategic Plan of Tennessee State Parks.

Strategy – Telling Full Stories: to identify and replicate best practices while establishing new methods for representing diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just dialogues.

Action Plan:

1. A better knowledge of the history of Cove lake State Park, how and why it was created in addition to how its development influenced the land and people of the area.
2. The ability to identify the excavated area inhabited by early Mound Builders and relate to the impact they had on the development of our culture's way of life, including farming techniques and tool production.
3. How our recreational and natural resources exhibit a positive impact on the surrounding community.
4. Acquire a basic knowledge and have a more profound awareness of our native flora and fauna populating the diverse ecosystems within our boundaries.

Strategy – Interpretative Media: Connecting people to the resources of Tennessee State Parks with technology in ways that compliment and expand interpretation within and beyond the park, giving everyone access to becoming a park steward.

Action Plan:

1. Develop modern interpretive panels telling the full story of Cove Lake's history.
2. Create interactive interpretive areas where visitors can learn about the indigenous peoples of the area.
3. Develop AI or virtual areas where a visitor could view a working "Free Soil Farm" or a Native American village giving each visitor a glimpse into what past areas of Cove Lake may have been.

Strategy – Develop and maintain a portfolio of programs across multiple types of experiences:

- A. Interpretation of natural, historic, and cultural resources
- B. 3-5 unique experiences for all audiences
- C. Varying intensity from self-guided to immersive experiences
- D. Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- E. Varying costs to the user from "free to fee" based on value of the benefit to the participant.

Action Plan: Conduct the following programs throughout the season.

1. History of the Park
2. Early Inhabitants, Mound Builders
3. Hiking tour of historical features
4. Biking tour of historical features
5. Cultural special events, community
6. Campfire programs
7. Guided Historical Kayak Tour

Strategy – Develop and maintain diverse and varied resourced-based outdoor recreation opportunities across multiple types of experiences:

- A.** Managing recreational use with the stewardship needs of the resource
- B.** Varying intensity from self-guided to guided experiences
- C.** Partnership opportunities for program delivery
- D.** Varying costs to the user from “free to fee” based on value of the benefit to the participant and impact to the resource.

Action Plan: Conduct the following programs throughout the season.

1. Nature Hikes
2. Nature bike tours
3. Wildflower Identification walks/hikes
4. Mammal Identification
5. Bird watching/identification
6. Native snakes/reptiles
7. Trees of Tennessee
8. Wetlands
9. Enviroscope, water shed protection
10. Community Helpers
11. Creek critters
12. Beavers Workshop
13. Leave No Trace
14. Litter programs
15. Nature scavenger hunts
16. Nature crafts
17. Water environment/quality
18. Plant Native
19. Guided Kayak Eco Tour

HELPFUL DEFINITIONS:

- Nonpersonal Interpretation: Interpretive media that do not require a person to deliver a message (i.e. exhibits, waysides, brochures, signs, magazines, books, etc.).
- Personal Interpretation: One person or persons providing interpretation to another person or persons.
- Interpretive Program: Activities, presentations, publications, audio-visual media, signs, and exhibits that convey key heritage resource messages to audiences. (Adapted from US Fish & Wildlife Service)
- Interpretation: a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.

Financial Performance Goals

Financial performance goals are a critical performance management tool of the Tennessee State Park System. While the financial performance of parks are managed more intently at the system level, individual parks are expected to recover a portion of their operating costs through the generation of earned revenues where appropriate and to contribute to the system goals. The majority of earned revenues at state parks are generated through facility usage (campsites, cabins, lodge rooms, rentable pavilions, etc.), the delivery of fee-based programs and services, equipment rental and usage, and retail sales. Other forms of revenue generation come from golf courses and restaurants where those amenities are present. That said, not all parks have the same ability to generate earned revenues because the availability of facilities or programs vary widely from one park to the next. The “recovery” of operational costs by earned revenues is referred to as “cost recovery”. Operating costs beyond those supported by earned revenues represents the extent to which state funding support operations at each park.

The table below represents the overall park cost recovery for this specific park for the most recent fiscal year and forecast estimates for the upcoming five years. These estimates are based on projection estimates for known and foreseeable costs and recovery figures.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE GOALS						
	Current Cost Recovery (2022)	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2023	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2024	Target Cost Recovery: FY: 2025	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2026	Target Cost Recovery: FY 2027
Park Overall	43.76%	40.19%	35.45%	10.63%	36.00%	36.50%

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